

Iowa awards \$56 million for highway work

By **James Q. Lynch** | Friday, February 20, 2009

DES MOINES — Iowa transportation officials awarded contracts Friday for 19 highway and bridge projects using federal stimulus dollars.

The projects represent a portion of the approximately \$358.2 million in federal highway stimulus funding appropriated to Iowa, according to Iowa Department of Transportation Director Nancy Richardson. Bids for the projects were opened Tuesday, the day President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

In announcing the \$56.6 million in projects scattered across the state, Gov. Chet Culver said he wanted to put the federal stimulus dollars to work as soon as possible “to create and retain good jobs in Iowa.”

None of the projects are in the Quad-City area.

Using the federal stimulus funds for “ready-to-go” projects will allow the Iowa DOT to accelerate or add other highway projects to the state’s five-year transportation improvement program — “something that would not have been possible without the stimulus funding,” Richardson said.

The 19 projects were in the state five-year program, Dena Gray-Fisher of the DOT said.

She expects the DOT to announce more projects next month, including some local projects that will include stimulus funds.

“The local agencies are identifying projects and refining their lists and once their lists are prepared, the DOT will let the contracts,” she said.

The Transportation Commission does not have to approve the local projects.

Work on the projects announced Friday will begin as soon as weather permits. In addition to the construction jobs, the projects will increase the demand for related supplies and services and further economic development in Iowa around the improvements, Culver said.

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